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## **HIGHLANDS SCHOOL GRADUATES EMBODY CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP**

Irving, Texas (June 5, 2009)—On the weekend that the Catholic faith celebrated The Feast of Pentecost, the event which marks the beginning of the apostles' evangelical mission and the foundation of the Catholic Church, 32 seniors from The Highlands School celebrated the commencement of their own personal journeys as Christian leaders. Addressing the faculty and staff at a luncheon meeting yesterday, Highlands' Executive Director John Borley said, "The Highlands School's main goal is to form our students into responsible Christian leaders and then send them out into the world ready to represent Christ. I am happy to say that I believe we accomplished our goal with those 32 seniors who graduated last Saturday."

Although academic achievement is stressed at The Highlands School, the highest honor for a graduate is to be the recipient of the *Integer Award*. This award incorporates the four dimensions of Christian formation: intellectual, human, spiritual and apostolic. Formation is the basis for helping students fulfill the unique mission for which they were created. Since there is both a Boys' and a Girls' School at The Highlands, there are two recipients for each award. Maria Albert of Coppell received the *Integer Award* for the Girls' School and Jacob Schaad of Dallas for the Boys' School. After receiving the award, Fr. Alfonse, Formation Director for the Boys' School, conveyed to the parents his gratitude when he revealed, "The school is well aware that formation of the child begins at home." This was definitely applicable to the Schaad parents, since Jacob is the second child from his family to receive this prestigious award.

The school's two valedictorians were Molly Miller of Irving and Heung Sun Kwon of Denton. Miller is also a National Merit Finalist. Having graduated with a 4.110 grade point average, she will be attending the University of Oklahoma with a full scholarship. Kwon, who will be attending New York University, graduated with a grade point average of 4.010. Both students gave inspirational speeches that both impressed and amused their peers.

After the twelve boys and twenty girls processed into the gym in full regalia, they were sanctified by The Most Reverend Bishop Kevin J. Farrell, Seventh Bishop of Dallas. Formation Director for the Girls' School, Denise Funke, commented, "We are so grateful for Bishop Farrell's presence at our graduation and for his support of our mission here at The Highlands." The Bishop, who spoke on the magnitude of charity and loving one's neighbor, delivered the invocation and benediction.

Students are encouraged to respect life as part of their Christian formation, which made Karen Garnett an appropriate choice for the keynote speaker. Mrs. Garnett, who has been the Executive Director of the Catholic Pro Life Committee—Dallas for sixteen years, is the recipient of several

prestigious awards, including the Cardinal Mindszenty Foundation of Texas' *Motherhood Award* in 2007 and the *John Cardinal O'Connor Pro-Life Hall of Fame Award* in 2006. When introducing her, Mr. Borley told the audience, "Her leadership, passion and energy for pro life are infectious to those around her. We are honored to have her address us tonight." Under her headship, which began in 1993, the number of abortion centers in Dallas has fallen from thirteen to five. Mrs. Garnett recalled Pope John Paul II's words that remind us of our "inescapable responsibility of choosing to be unconditionally pro-life" (28). He said, "...the task of accepting and serving life involves everyone; and this task must be fulfilled above all towards life when it is at its weakest" (43).

The *President's Award*, for educational excellence, is given to students with a cumulative grade point average 3.5 or higher. These recipients were: Maria Albert, Katharine Dober, Cecilia Arreola-Marvan Mariana Martin, Molly Miller, Kathleen Venincasa, Charlotte Ward, Thomas Kleiner, Henry Kwon, James Meier and Jacob Schaad.

Texas Christian University awards the most outstanding incoming freshmen with academic scholarships. The following students have been awarded recognition and scholarships from TCU: Maria Albert, Cecilia Arreola-Marvan, Mariana Martin, and James Meier.

In mass this morning, Fr. Alfonse passionately revealed The Highlands greatest asset to his teachers. He reminded them, "The greatest gift we can give our students is that they believe in God and they believe in themselves. Always stay close to Him, because we exist to transmit the love of God to our children. More importantly, if we convey the love of God to each other, it will transmit into our students believing in themselves."

### **About The Highlands School**

Established in 1986, The Highlands School is a Catholic college-preparatory school. Offering grades Pre-K through 12th, the mission of The Highlands School is to provide the highest quality education and integral formation of the student as a well-rounded mature youth of character and integrity. Personalized attention from faculty, staff, and religious provides each student with the maximum opportunity for growth.

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